EARLY MARRIAGE
AND
LATE PARENTAGE

BY

OXONIENSIS

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EARLY MARRIAGE

AND

LATE PARENTAGE

The Only Solution of the Social Problem

BY

OXONIENSIS

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Dedicated

TO

C. R. DRYSDALE, Esq., M.D., M.R.C.P., F.R.C.S.,

IN ADMIRING RECOGNITION

OF HIS SPLENDID SERVICES AND UNTIRING DEVOTION AS

PRESIDENT OF THE MALTHUSIAN LEAGUE.

"MAN'S prerogative is, that by the use of his reason he is able to study Nature outside himself, and by observation so to control Nature as to make her add to his happiness instead of bringing him misery."—MRS. ANNIE BESANT'S *Law of Population.*

Introductory.

THE result of long and serious thought as to the *raison d'être* of poverty and the attendant social evils, is my firm conviction of the absolute truth of the natural law, first enunciated by Malthus: that law, briefly stated, being, that all life has a constant tendency to increase beyond the possible means of subsistence —man, equally with the brutes, being exposed to this eternal decree of Nature. I am equally satisfied that, by his assertion of this law, Malthus revealed once for all, the *ultimate* cause to which the great evil of poverty is traceable: I say, *ultimate* cause, advisedly: for of course, I recognise that the immediate causes are other and different. Myself a thorough Socialist by conviction, I am still convinced that all schemes of redistribution, ideal Government, Socialism, Communism, &c.:— however sound and good they may be—do not touch the *root* of the matter, which beyond all doubt is concerned *ultimately* with the natural law. I am fully persuaded that this is the inevitable conclusion at which all thinkers on the subject must finally—however unwillingly— arrive. Shocking though it may at first be to sensitive and prejudiced minds, that the conditions affecting man should be discovered to be governed in this—as they have been discovered to be governed in other relations, by the very same laws as are the lower creations, it is the greatest folly to allow our prejudice to blind us to the truth. For my part, it is, I confess, cause of real astonishment to me, that anyone should need to be convinced as to the very plain and obvious results of the natural law, further illustrated as that law has been, by the writings of the great and illustrious Darwin.

The present brochure is issued mainly with the view of counteracting the mischievous teaching of those Socialists, who, whilst pretending to be working for the abolition of poverty, encourage the people to be constant in contributing to its chief cause. Supposing that the most thorough-going form of Socialism triumphed to-morrow, the natural

law would still remain unaltered, and it is from persistently ignoring this fact, that many speakers and writers—Socialistic and otherwise—fail to trace back the source of poverty to its ultimate cause. It is of supreme importance that we should not, while working for the removal of the social conditions contributing to the perpetuation of poverty, overlook or ignore its other causes. It is very greatly to be regretted that this should be so often done. In any examination of the causes of the evil of poverty, it is necessary that *all* should be considered, and especially that the great natural cause should not be disregarded or overlooked.

Filled with sorrow and dismay at the wide-spread want, no less than the equally wide-spread abuse, of the enjoyment of the holy passion of love, so sadly characteristic of our modern society, I have insisted on the necessity and wisdom of early marriages as the obvious and natural remedy: advice which—while I humbly submit it is much better—is not really so opposed to Mr. Malthus' advocacy of late marriage as at first appears, since accompanied with the necessary interdiction of an early or large family. Mr. Malthus' proposed cure for the evil was admittedly worse—if possible—than the evil itself, because he failed to recognise the great truth that *love is a necessity of life.* That the marriage state should be possible to all is the first necessity of a healthy society, and is the only remedy against that modern moloch of mercenary love, to which our youth are sacrificed.

June, 1883. OXONIENSIS.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURAL LAW.

The same with man as with the lower animals—The struggle for existence, and survival of the fittest—Its operation with the brutes and with man—Positive checks to population in the past—Checks of to-day—Their insufficiency to prevent the evil of over-population—A natural result that increased poverty should attend increased wealth and civilization.

IT was reserved for Mr. MALTHUS to first point out the great truth that the law of increase is precisely the same with man as with the lower animals. This he did in the celebrated essay in which he demonstrated, beyond a doubt, that man, equally with all other animals, has a constant tendency to increase beyond the possible means of subsistence. Nature, amongst other cruel edicts, has decreed that all life shall increase faster than the means of sustaining it. The only limit to the possible increase of all animated life is that imposed by the struggle for existence, involving the process of thinning-out, by the premature death of those who succumb. The weaker animals are killed out of existence by the stronger, and the less fortunate—from any cause or causes—of humanity are as surely crushed out by the poverty which involves semi-starvation. Whilst the power of increase of the human species, as of all animals, is practically unlimited, the supply of food is strictly limited. The production of food—though there be the most industrious and constantly increased cultivation of the soil—cannot advance at any one epoch beyond a certain ratio: and at whatever rate it may be increased, it is always easily outstripped by the increase of population. It is, as it were, a perpetual race, in which, whatever the fluctuations at times may be, the one is always in advance of the other. The rate of increase may and does vary considerably at times. In all new countries, with a fruitful soil, and all the conditions of life favourable, it is of course much higher than in old and over-populated countries. Many causes—natural and artificial—may affect it; but at whatever rate, the population of

a country, old or new, advances, *while it is unrestrained and unchecked, save by the bare limit of subsistence,* it must always press hardly upon the positive food supply.

Now against the possible rate of increase of mankind, certain natural checks have of course always operated, more or less: these indeed have not prevented the evils of over-population, though they have served to prevent their assuming a crisis. Amongst savage and barbarous races, the severe privations and hardships of uncivilised existence do not fail to carry off large numbers at comparatively early ages. In all countries the positive checks of war, famine, epidemic diseases, etc., have operated to keep down the popnlation. To-day, however, we enjoy the advantages, and along with them suffer the penalties, of a higher civilisation. We no longer have the very frequent and bloody wars of old: through better cultivation, we seldom experience famines: whilst the increased medical and sanitary science of the age has rendered epidemics and all diseases far more rare than formerly. Consequently, we no longer have whole numbers of the population periodically swept away as formerly, with the necessary result that there is a pressure of population to-day, such as has never been experienced before. Higher civilisation, improved medical skill, and increased sanitary knowledge have removed the old life-destroying checks, which served formerly to thin the population, and the principal checks to population to-day are resolvable (as Malthus pointed out) into moral restraint, vice, and misery. Under the head of moral restraint we have:—(1) The almost universal lateness of marriage in the upper classes (amongst the lower classes marriage is comparatively early, but the mortality of children very great.) (2) Celibacy. Under the head of vice, we have:—(1) The great evil of prostitution. (2) Unnatural practices. (3) Procuring of abortion. There can be no doubt that the last is a very common practice, despite the great danger always attending it. The evil of prostitution is general in all our towns, and removes a large proportion from the number of productive women. Yet we see that these artificial checks are quite insufficient to prevent the too rapid increase of population. This prevails despite them. The competition for means of livelihood, the struggle for mere existence becomes more and more desperate. There is the most wide-spread and appalling poverty always with us; and thousands of adults and children die off prematurely, through hardship, privation, and disease brought about by a poverty involving semi-starvation. Though the increase of population is so very much below its possible rate, it

is still beyond the limit of support—a necessary phenomenon in an old and civilised country, where, with a population constantly increasing far beyond the resources of the land, the checks of barbarism no longer operate. These checks, until comparatively quite lately in the world's history, have tended to keep the evil to some extent within bounds, so that both the effect and cause of the natural law escaped the serious recognition and attention of men, until Malthus wrote. But even when the operation of those checks has been most active and apparent, the inevitable and eternal antagonism between the normal and unrestrained increase of population and the continued supply of cheap food, has always been experienced. It is asserted, that by these checks nature has provided the natural and effective remedy for the evil; but it is evident that the tendency of civilisation is directly to more and more remove them—a result we have every reason to congratulate ourselves upon. But while, in escaping from the Scylla of war, famine, disease, &c., we continue to sojourn in the Charybdis of the evils involved in a grinding poverty and misery which literally does to death thousands of human beings just as surely as the old agencies, it is clear that we have but merely exchanged the *form* of the evil, without being in any degree nearer to its removal. Thus our modern society is brought face to face with this dilemma: that whereas on the one hand, the increasing progress of mankind is constantly tending to enormously diminish the natural checks, the artificial checks, of to-day, without being half as effectual, are moreover in themselves very great and serious evils, which we are bound to use our very best endeavours to finally remove.

It is apparent therefore that the state of society, so far as this matter is concerned, is very much worse than a century ago; and increasing civilisation must only tend to increase it. So far, therefore, from its being extraordinary that there should be a wide and increasing poverty along with the development of national wealth and the progress of civilisation, it is obvious that the one must always be the necessary and natural concomitant of the other, so long as a rapid increase of population goes on, unrestrained by any checks save those of vice and celibacy.

CHAPTER II.

THE EVIL OF POVERTY.

Manifold miseries of poverty—Universal nature of it—The source of all social evils—Futility of the philanthropy which accepts Poverty as irremediable—Necessity of removing the cause—The cause of poverty.

WHAT is it that makes this fair world of ours,—with all its potentialities for universal happiness—a scene of despair and misery? What is it that makes our heart ache every hour of the day? What is it that in the moments of light-hearted mirth and festivity throws its dark shadow over our souls? The condition of the poor! Everywhere it is the same: in every country and every people. We cannot escape from it; on all sides the sufferings of the poor appeal for sympathy and aid. It curses us all,—this terrible evil of poverty! for, strong as is the natural instinct of selfishness in our human nature, even the rich and wealthy cannot have a full enjoyment of life, with the sight of the wide-spread poverty and misery around them. Who can enjoy life, however happily situated, with suffering and destitution visibly surrounding him? Those of us who enjoy competence, who are enabled to have some share of the pleasures and luxuries of life; who live in an atmosphere of culture and intellectual refinement, too seldom realise how great an evil this poverty is, which condemns millions of the human race to drag out a weary existence of misery; which embitters the life, kills the aspirations, and blasts the hopes of men; which causes fair women to droop and die, and men to grow old while yet young. Little enough do we realise the sufferings of the poor workers, who live a death-in-life existence, toiling unceasingly, yet never obtaining a sufficiency of the bare necessaries of life, knowing no enjoyment, no leisure, no hope! It is this poverty which is the fruitful mother of all the social evils—the parent source of crime, vice, drunkenness, prostitution, ignorance, dirt, disease.

The workers in our towns and cities are huddled together in unhealthy and squalid lodging houses, with every evil surrounding and unwholesome conditions of life, and at length they become desperate with their hard fate, and are driven to drink and crime. Men drink to drown the cares and miseries of poverty. Drink causes vice and crime. Great efforts are made, it is true

by benevolent and philanthropic agencies, to aid the wants and relieve the necessities of the poor; but they necessarily achieve but an insignificant result. It is evident that all attempts to remedy the sad *effects* of poverty, must be comparatively futile. The efforts of philanthropy should be directed rather to *removing the cause*. All attempts to remove the effects of an evil, while no effort is made to examine and remove the cause, must fail to produce much result. For instance, many excellent and well meaning people make great efforts to improve the moral condition of the poor, with but a necessarily feeble result, since the radical improvement of their physical condition is the first necessity. The simple reason why the efforts of philanthropy to remove social evils, have hitherto failed, is because the parent cause—poverty—is either altogether overlooked, or is regarded as being irremediable and inevitable. Poverty is complacently accepted as a divine institution, and it is regarded as revolutionary and impious to question its existence. Such views, however acceptable to the rich and selfish, are both false and absurd. Poverty can and will be removed; but only by the removal of its cause or causes. But what are the puny and spasmodic efforts of any philanthropy worth, which omits to grapple with the root of the evil? No more than an attempt to empty the ocean with a sieve! Human effort is powerless to remove the evils that result from poverty, until the cause of poverty is removed. All philanthropic and social schemes, which do not have for their chief aim the eradication of poverty, are, as far as all practical purpose is served, but so much dallying with the evil.

Now, what is the cause of poverty? Immediately, no doubt, the unequal distribution of wealth; *ultimately*, over-population. When the immediate cause is removed, the ultimate one will still remain, and must be reckoned with in any attempt to solve the problem of the removal of poverty. No doubt the better equalisation of wealth would remove one obvious cause of a vast amount of poverty, and especially the more extreme and squalid poverty, now so painfully common. It should be the aim, therefore, of every social reformer to bring about this better distribution of wealth. But the fact of poverty does not owe its existence to one cause only. It is the fashion with certain socialist speakers to ignore this truth, and to talk as if all causes of poverty will be removed, with the realisation of their schemes. Indignation with the present social system so entirely absorbs their attention, that they fail to recognise any influences lying outside society's arrangements. In the accumulation of wealth

in the hands of the few, they are satisfied they see the explanation of the evil. Capital, "*c' est l'ennemie,*" say these gentlemen; and though some may hardly be prepared to accept this dogma, it certainly has sufficient truth, whilst landowners and capitalists absorb all profits, and the producers are assigned a pittance barely sufficient to sustain life.

The remedy, we are told, lies in the nationalisation of the land, socialism, &c. Now, there can be no doubt that the nationalisation of the land, &c., is only a question of time: but these writers make a very great mistake in assuming that such realisations would *finally* remove all the causes of poverty. *They confound secondary with primary causes.* They who imagine that the *final* remedy for poverty would be found in any social revolution—however thorough—have a very false conception of its nature. Assuredly, such revolution will be, by which our present social conditions will undergo radical changes; but if this change was effected to-morrow, poverty would still be, *while its natural cause continued to be ignored.* By all means, welcome the revolution, which is sooner or later, whether it takes place quietly or violently, inevitable: but when we shall have swept away all the artificial causes which contribute to the extremes of poverty and wealth in our social system, the ultimate cause of poverty, which is a natural one, will still remain. Even in a communistic society, the prosperity and comfort of the individuals composing it would entirely depend upon the degree of attention with which this cause was recognised by all. Supposing here in England, the aims of our more thorough social reformers were realised to-day. Supposing that our wretched agricultural laborers were peasant proprietors; and that the toilers in our manufactories, &c., enjoyed a just share of the profits; what would be the effect? The immediate result would of course be a very great access of comfort and prosperity to the workers. The secondary result would as surely be, *more and earlier marriages*, resulting (unless prudence was observed) in a very large and rapid increase of population; and in a comparatively short time we should have poverty, and the attendant social evils again. Unless social reforms are attended with an adequate perception and appreciation on the part of the people, of the effect of the natural law, they cannot *permanently* remove poverty. To a certain extent they will do so for a time, but it would be for the time only. However excellent the social and political conditions of a country may be, it cannot, at any one of its epochs, support beyond a certain number *in comfort.* If that number is exceeded, as—with the natural rate of increase—it is

constantly exceeded, more or less poverty must be the result. It is as evident, therefore, as any of Euclid's propositions, that whatever artificial causes we may encounter first, the final cause of poverty is referable to the natural law alone. Poverty, then, will not be rendered impossible by any mere redistribution of wealth. It is the greatest folly to talk or write as if it will.

As the ultimate cause of the existence of poverty in any country is its over-population, it is evident that poverty may be a chronic fact, even in a country where wealth is equally distributed. Poverty will still prevail in a country—however its wealth be distributed—if its population increases beyond a certain rate—the limit of the rate being the limit at which, at any one period, all the resources of the country can sustain its inhabitants in comfort.

When that rate is exceeded, we have one cause of poverty: which poverty, in an ordinary country, will affect the mass of people individually; and in a communistic society, the general prosperity of the whole community. And here, it is hardly necessary to point out that when we speak of the limit of population, which a country can sustain *in comfort and prosperity*, that limit is necessarily very different from the actual number of population which it can, and normally does, sustain. The millions who exists somehow, living daily from hand to mouth, must be excluded in the former estimate, as must the thousands of actual paupers, supported out of the rates, in our workhouses and unions. Whatever the distribution of wealth, if there are more people in a country than there is room for, it is plain there cannot be the same individual prosperity there would be, were the surplus population non-existent.

Superficial thinkers on the subject think of poverty as *wholly* owing to the unequal distribution of wealth, because in a community where we see some men enjoying such vastly larger wealth than others, it seems so obvious and apparent a truism to refer the fact of poverty wholly to its most immediate cause. When we see one man struggling with poverty, enjoying only one five hundredth part of the yearly wealth of another, we naturally conclude that if some of the wealth of the richer could accrue to the poorer man, the injustice would be remedied; and we are apt to assume that a general rectification of this nature would do away with poverty entirely. Of course, such redistribution would at once remove the most plain and obvious cause of poverty, but the other grand cause of over-population would still remain, so long as the increase of population exceeded the limit mentioned above.

Certain individuals affect to laugh at this truth. They blatantly assert that there is room for any increase of population, however great. The simple answer to their assertions, so confidently advanced, is, that if the rate of increase exceeds the limit beyond which the resources of the country cannot sustain more in comfort, it will and must entail more or less poverty. That it does constantly tend to exceed that limit in all, and especially old countries, is evident. That it consequently is a constant and real cause of poverty, is also equally certain; and since the passing of this limit is a direct cause of poverty, and is also constantly occuring, it is clear that the assertion that there is room for any and every increase of population, is a mischievous and puerile falsehood.

If the population increases faster than the resources of the country, a large amount of poverty must ensue; the number of people of greater or less wealth may be very large; but there will be a far greater number of poor. Although, in the meantime, the wealth of the country, as a nation, may be largely increasing. It is an absurd confusion—though many are guilty of it—to assume that the great national wealth of a country, necessarily implies the individual prosperity of its inhabitants. On the contrary, it is often, as in England, to-day, allied with the most wide spread poverty. And this is simply owing to the natural law that the unrestricted increase of population, always outstrips all the resources—natural and artificial—of the country, in which it occurs. The trade and industries of a country, however large, however developed they may have become, do not make up for the constant increase of population, so far as the abolition of a constant and lamentable amount of poverty is concerned.

No country, however many her industries, however great her resources, can support at any one period, beyond a certain number, *in prosperity and comfort.* If that number is exceeded, as it constantly is, (with the natural and unchecked rate of increase) poverty and misery must evidently be the necessary result to a large number. And although this truth may be more apparently obvious in an old country, where the population has attained a very high figure, it is really equally true of a country at any and every period of its history. The only real difference, as regards poverty, between an old country and a new one, is that in the latter, the poverty is not so conspicuous, whereas, in an old and over-crowded country, it makes itself constantly seen and felt. A country of course has its seasons of plenty and prosperity, as of adversity and scarcity; but these fluctuations make no per-

ceptible difference—comparatively considered—as to the proportion of rich and poor. In a season of prosperity, marriages largely increase, the population receives the consequent impetus, and the normal state is soon reached again. Improved agriculture, new industries, developed commerce, do not materially alter or change the conditions, for increased population easily outstrips the increased resources.

Over-population then, is the ultimate cause of poverty, though there are other and more immediate causes. This over-population is the direct result of the natural law: that man, in common with the lower animals, is constantly breeding faster than there is room for him. The obvious conclusion at which we must arrive is, that the result involved in the natural law, constitutes a very grave and serious evil.

CHAPTER III.

ANTI-MALTHUSIAN ARGUMENTS.

Would-be funny objectors—National wealth and National prosperity—Population and prosperity—Increased cultivation of land—Emigration—Failure as a remedy.

CERTAIN writers and speakers endeavour to refute the truth of the natural law, and affect to laugh at what they are pleased to term the "bugbear of Malthusianism." It is a common resource of certain would-be clever people when they are unable to controvert a truth by argument, to endeavour to discredit it by ridicule. It is so easy, and requires so little knowledge of the subject! That we may consider all objections to this truth, let us briefly glance at some of the arguments of those sapient individuals who affect to treat the subject as a huge joke!

It is constantly objected that as England is, as a nation, a very rich country, there must be room for any increase of her population. This fallacy arises from a false assumption, as we saw in the last chapter. The national wealth of a country—however great it may be—is by no means synonymous with the individual prosperity of its inhabitants. A country may be very rich, and yet have an immense amount of pauperism, as is actually the case with England. A rich country is not necessarily a prosperous one—understanding by the term, the individual prosperity of its inhabitants. A country is not necessarily the most prosperous, because it boasts the largest capital and biggest trade. A rich and wealthy plutocracy do not compose the nation. It is but small consolation to tell the poor worker, struggling to maintain a wife and family on sixteen shillings a week, of the great wealth of the nation. Unless he can have a little of it, it might as well not exist, as far as he is concerned.

A country can only be justly called prosperous when there is room and work in it for all its inhabitants. When every indi-

vidual of its people is enabled to enjoy a fair share of comfort and prosperity. Accordingly, France may be more justly called prosperous than England, because there is far less poverty in the former country than in the latter, and proportionally fewer of its inhabitants actually in want of work and food. There is more room, therefore, in France for an increase of population than in England.

Another contention, sometimes urged, is that the prosperity of a country must necessarily increase with the growth of its population. Here again, if we are to understand by the term the individual prosperity of its inhabitants, this is not the fact. In the case of a new or young country, it is perhaps true that its prosperity will increase with the growth of its population: *up to a certain point, that is.* But as the country advances, though of course the *national* wealth will increase with the population, the prosperity of the people will be injured rather than augmented by a rapid increase. We are constantly reminded that there is a very great deal of land in England, which might and ought to be converted from its present unprofitable purposes to the increasing the food supply of the country. Quite true. But the increase of population would not permit us to benefit long by the increased supply.

Again, we are asked with an air of triumph why there should be over-population, when there are countries in the world with land lying waste, and waiting to be cultivated; as if this had anything to do with the question. The evil is just that this should be so. The world is not yet, at any rate, whatever it may become by and bye, absolutely over-peopled. The evil is that it is relatively. Over-population is none the less an evil in one country, because in another country, in another part of the world, it does not exist. Emigration, we are told, is the remedy. Carried out on an adequate scale—by whole colonies leaving the mother country together—it might be a temporary remedy. Carried out on any other fashion, it is none at all. It is easy to point to emigration, but mankind cannot migrate at will, in flocks like the birds, from one part of the world to another. It is just those who would most benefit by emigration, who are practically prevented from it. The poor and penniless worker wisely elects to "bear the ills he has, rather than fly to others that he knows not of." If we can only advise him to emigrate, while he has neither the means nor opportunity, we may as well forego the advice. It is no consolation to a starving family in Whitechapel to be told that there is land to be had for the asking in New Zealand.

Moreover, emigration, even if it were feasible to carry it out on an adequate scale, can only effect atemporary remedy, *unless those who remain in the old country have learnt the lesson of conjugal prudence.* Supposing it were possible to transport some millions from England to the colonies, as in the case of socialist changes, the immediate result would of course be increased comfort and prosperity to those at home, *followed by more and earlier marriages*, which, *unless prudence was observed*, would soon bring up the population again to the old starvation limit. The process might be repeated again and again, but the result would be always the same, as regards the old country, so long as the effect of the natural law continued to be ignored.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EVILS OF PROSTITUTION AND CELIBACY.

Prostitution—Its increase in old countries Its *raison d'être*—Celibacy, an evil—Late marriage *versus* early marriage.

ONE of the greatest evils of the present age is the general diffusion of the evil of prostitution. It is a terrible blot upon our much vaunted civilisation that the streets and public places of our towns should be crowded at nightfall with thousands of young girls and women ready to sell their favors to every bidder. It is infinitely sad to think of these women, who ought to be leading good and useful lives as happy wives and mothers, devoted to this unhappy calling, and wasting the best years of their youth in riot and debauchery. There can be no doubt that the evil of prostitution is seen at its greatest in old countries, and that over-population is the chief cause both for its origin and continued survival. It may be safely asserted that at least eight out of every ten prostitutes are driven to the life from sheer pressure of poverty. The occupations open to women are few, shamefully paid, and hopelessly over-crowded. Prostitution—promising gaiety and abundance—is preferred to rags and semi-starvation. So true is this, that the supply of this class of women is actually far larger than the demand—large as that is in our great towns.

Men of all classes, and all ages are driven, owing to the common consequences of marriage, to its indefinite postponement. The marriage state is dreaded and avoided, as involving a large and burdensome family, and the remedy is sought in mercenary intercourse. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that such intercourse is preferred by any appreciable number of men or women. It is a well known fact that the large majority of prostitutes hate their mode of life, and would thankfully renounce it for marriage, were it possible ; and it is equally certain that but comparatively few men would seek promiscuous love, were marriage possible to them.

"The embrace of harlots is tasteless," said Milton : and it is not from choice that men defer marriage and true love. But the demand for love is deeply implanted in our nature. and men and women, rather than not love at all, will seek its illicit counterfeit.

Influenced by the fear of incurring a large and burdensome family, many men never marry at all. This avoidance of marriage condemns thousands of women who should become happy wives and mothers, to a life of celibacy. Many men also who loathe promiscuous love, and yet dread the prospect of marriage, live a life of solitute, uncheered and unloved. Now an enforced celibacy is in itself a very great and real evil. We cannot deny any want of our nature, without evil consequences. To the majority of men and women, love may be said to be a necessity of their nature. A state of celibacy is unnatural, and if long continued is very often prejudicial to health of body, balance of mind, and general happiness and well being. It is very sad therefore to think of the large number of women and men condemned all their lives to be unwilling celibates. It is evident, then, that the avoidance and postponement of marriage, so general amongst men, is on every ground greatly to be deplored. It is essential that the marriage state should be possible to all. The custom of late marriage is bad from every point of view, involving, as it does, the evils of vice and celibacy. Early marriage is natural and best. Love belongs to the season of youth. A fearful amount of misery has been caused in the world by attempts to ignore the fact that love is a natural, and not an artificial passion, and that it is proper and natural for youth to enjoy it rightly. If early marriage were possible and general, there can be no doubt that society would be in a far better and happier state; whilst the chief cause of vice and prostitution would be removed. It is certain that to defer the happiness of wedded love until the age of thirty or forty, as is now so generally the custom, is to lose irrevocably those years in which such happiness is at once most desirable and most enjoyable.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY MARRIAGE, AND THE LIMITATION OF THE FAMILY.

Poverty, involved by large families—Prudent limitation of the family—General in France—Evils of reckless procreation—Wisdom of small families.

IN all old countries, then, it is evident that the vast amount of poverty we see in them is caused chiefly by over-population. The population goes on increasing at a rapid rate; emigration takes place on far too small a scale to afford any real relief; the resources of the country become more and more exhausted, the means of livelihood more and more difficult, and poverty more and more common. In this old and over-crowded country of England, with population increasing at the present rate, it becomes harder every day to obtain a living. The struggle becomes harder, the competition fiercer every year. The terribly over-crowded state of the labor market in all departments forces the starving competitors to accept miserably insufficient wages. It is a choice between work at a very small pittance, or none at all. A man with a wife and family of children to support, if he would keep out of the workhouse, must have work; he must accept it at the terms offered, whatever those terms be. Where there are a score of applicants for every post, bargaining is out of the question. So long, then, as the evil of over-population exists in a country, so long will the evil of poverty together with the attendant social evils continue to exist. It is evident that this evil of over-population must not only continue, but increase, with the continuation of the present high rate of increase.

Early marriage, as we have seen, is very desirable, but even the married state is viewed as an evil by many, in a country where a large family means large sorrow. It is this rapid increase, as involved in large families, that is the direct cause of poverty, both immediately and in the further future, immediately to the parents themselves, in incurring responsibilities beyond their means, and ultimately, in adding to the increase of an already excessive population. Thus the struggle of life is made infinitely more difficult both for parents and children; the parents by their lack of prudence, being condemned to struggle with poverty all their lives, and their offspring after them. Now the remedy for this too rapid increase, as involved in large families, lies in con-

jugal prudence, and the wise limitation of the family. Such prudent limitation is universal in France and other countries. Indeed, in France but very few families number more than two or three children. The consequence is, that in France, although comparatively few Frenchmen emigrate, the population is kept within the limit of support, and there is—compared with other countries—but little poverty. Unfortunately, in England, all classes exhibit a reckless imprudence in this matter; especially is this the case with the poorer classes, who bring children into the world wholesale, totally regardless of consequences. The results are in innumerable cases most disastrous, affecting both offspring and parents. The parents are overwhelmed with poverty, and take to drink; the unhappy children are left, uncared for and unattended, to run wild in the streets, and eventually go to swell the ranks of our pauper and criminal classes. In all cases, where a larger family is begotten *than there is easy provision for*, the consequences must be attended with evil both to parents and children.

The absurd policy of *laissez faire*, so common in this matter, tends generally to produce great misery; for which, no doubt, the easy superstition that "God never sends fresh mouths, but he sends food to feed them" is largely responsible. As a matter of stern reality, no such pleasant accommodation of supply to demand is known in our social economy. No doubt, the extra mouths are fed somehow, but at what cost! Where three could have been brought up in comparative luxury, without care or trouble, six are reared in privation, with difficulty and sorrow. Where six are brought into the world, when there is only provision for three, the result must be misery. It is the general occurrence of this sad result which makes the marriage state so dreaded. Yet, in this, as in all other affairs of life, a careful prudence is ever independent of the results incurred by recklessness. By the use of a preventive check to conception, the limitation of the family is easy, nor need offspring be begotten at all unless desired. A young married couple should in every case defer having a family until they have been married some years. They are far better fitted for the responsibilites of a family later on. Moreover, the children produced by parents in full maturity are far more highly endowed—both physically and mentally—than those of younger parents; and this, it need hardly be observed, is very strong reason for deferring parentage. The powers—mental and physical—of young parents are immature. Before begetting offspring parents should strive to improve and develop their own powers of mind and body; they should endeavor

to attain a high degree of health, strength, and vigor, for the future happiness and well-being of the child depends very greatly upon the mental and physical condition of its parents at the time it is begotten. A great source of evil is too frequent child-birth. The continuing child-bearing for a long number of years, as is the custom with the majority of English women, is most injurious both to mother and offspring. The health of the mother is destroyed and her strength exhausted, by too frequent parturition and lactation, and her offspring must proportionately suffer. How many mothers can trace the confirmed delicacy, perhaps life-long suffering of a child, to their own weak and debilitated state of health at the period of its gestation! It is shocking to see a young wife's health deliberately destroyed by the reckless procreation so common with young married people; the children born are, as a natural result, poor little weaklings—miserable specimens of humanity.

While however, early parentage is on every ground to be avoided, early marriage is, for the reasons we have seen, very desirable. If early marriage were general, thousands of women would be rescued from a life of celibacy, and our young men from the false pleasures of venal amours. There is no reason why early marriage should not be general *if early parentage is avoided.* It is, without doubt, far best for the young man to take a wife, and know the blessing of home, and the comfort and great happiness of married love; always provided that the young couple are prepared to exercise a wise prudence, and to refrain from either an early or a large family. There is no necessity for begetting a family, immediately upon marriage, as is the general and most foolish practice. Short as life may be for many things, it is assuredly long enough for the getting a family, and for the reasons we have seen, early parentage is to be avoided. To properly rear, train, and educate a young family is no small or light responsibility and no easy task; the difficulty of which is immensely increased by every additional member. Three or four children are a sufficient responsibility and care for the most assiduous of parents, and a larger family should not be lightly incurred. With the prudent limitation of the family, early marriage—in itself a very great good—is rendered possible and desirable, and the fear, as well as the cause, of the curse of poverty is practically removed.

CHAPTER VI.

COMFORT AND HAPPINESS v. WANT AND MISERY.

Difference between a large and small family—A happy home and a wretched one—Prudence the duty of all—Increased difficulty of life in the future of old countries—A superstition—Its groundlessness.

TO how many thousands of poverty-stricken homes do the children come as a curse rather than as a blessing! By how many parents, worn down by care and privation, are they felt to be a burden and a sorrow rather than a happiness! It is infinitely sad to think it should be so: that the young lives which should be gladly welcomed and tenderly loved should be regarded as a burden by their authors. Alas! poverty adds yet this to its other evil results, that it deadens by its withering influence the affections of the heart, sours the temper, and destroys even the natural feelings. Rich people, who have never known what it is to want, who have never felt their hearts bleed at the sight of their little loved ones wanting raiment and food, may not be able to understand the feeling spoken of above; but let them but know the cruel privations of poverty, and they would experience it fast enough. To the poor, who have already to deny themselves every luxury, and many necessities; who are taxed to the uttermost to find shoes for their children's feet, and bread for their stomachs, the advent of a new baby is regarded with a feeling of dismay! And how can we wonder that it should be so? To the poor a large family simply means additional privation: it means less of every necessity of life, not to speak of the luxuries: it means never-ending care and sorrow. To many of the respectable poor, the having two more children than they can well provide for means simply the difference between comparative affluence and want, the difference between comfort and discomfort, happiness and misery. Such is the difference to them, between a large family and a small one. Taking for example, the case of a working man in receipt of a pound a week: upon this he marries; his wife probably taking in washing, or needlework; now if they are content with a couple of children, the pair may live in comparative comfort, and may put by money gradually with which to improve their lot. If, however, they have a large family, their fate will be one continual weary struggle with poverty. If, where they can only afford to bring up two

children, they have six or seven, they entail present and future misery both upon themselves and their offspring. In the one case, there is a happy home, plenty, contentment. In the other, a home of misery, want, and wretchedness; in the one case the father comes home to a contented wife, and happy little ones. In the other, he sees his wife—the woman he took to "love and to cherish," worn out by the long struggle with poverty, and his little ones hungry and naked. Naturally, in his bitter anguish, he betakes himself to the gin-palace, and spends the little money he has, endeavoring to find false solace for his state. Such are the different results attending prudence and recklessness in this matter—results which will be vouched for by all who have had a practical experience amongst the poor. The worst of it is, that instead of the folly and madness of recklessness in this matter being pointed out to the poor by those who constitute themselves their advisers and teachers, they are left to find it out by the bitter lessons of a cruel experience. That experience must be ever the same. Those who bring more children into the world, than they can support with comfort, must suffer the invariable penalty. They will be condemned to suffer the terrible evils of poverty all their lives, instead of enjoying affluence and comfort. It is hardly necessary to point out that prudence in this matter is the duty not of the poor only, but of every class. There is a moral duty in the matter which belongs to all alike. The neglect of it here, is just as reprehensible and blamable as in the other affairs of life.

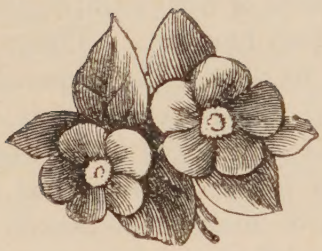
Especially does it apply to all classes in an old over-crowded country, where the difficulty of making a livelihood, and of supporting a family is pretty nearly equal all round, particularly in a country like England, where each class is expected to maintain its social position. There is the other important consideration—amongst the prudential considerations which should influence parents in every class, besides the motive of insuring their own comfort, viz., the future happiness and welfare of their offspring. As we have seen, so long as the natural rate of increase continues unchecked in an old country, the evil of over-population will still continue to increase. This, of course, means increasing difficulty in obtaining the means of livelihood.

Experience proves that emigration on the ordinary scale is powerless as a remedy: emigration on anything like an efficient scale is attended with such difficulties as practically render it impossible. Everything therefore goes to prove that the pressure of population even in so short a time as ten years hence,

will be far greater than it is now—great as it is at the present time. That is, in other words, that the battle of life, the fight of competition, the struggle for existence, will, if the natural rate of increase continues, become fiercer and more desperate in England, every year. Thus it will become more and more difficult to place our sons and to marry our daughters, in the old country. The resources of the country cannot be expected to go on increasing for ever, as they have done in the past. They must become more and more exhausted. Unless, therefore, parents are prepared to incur the trouble and expense of placing their children in the colonies, they must refrain from a large family in this over-crowded country. Already every business, every profession, and every trade is over-crowded, and the glut promises to go on increasing. Under such circumstances, it is simply cruelty to bring children wholesale into the world—in this country—unless indeed there is provision already made for them. This is no chimerical consideration. Every parent, who has had to do it, knows how increasingly hard it becomes in England to place our sons in life. Even when they have succeeded in finding an opening, in the large majority of cases, there is a far harder battle lying before them, than their parents have known. They will have a far wider and fiercer competition to encounter—a fact which parents are bound to remember. Where parents may not find much difficulty in starting two or three children in life, fairly well, they will find it a much harder matter to start half a dozen.

So long as the natural rate of increase continues, the evil of over-population will increase with each generation. When conjugal prudence shall have become general, the evil of over-population will disappear, and life will no longer be the terrible fight it is at present. Some thinkers have entertained the fanciful idea that with this very desirable result, progress may be brought to a stand-still. They are haunted with the fear that the principle of the struggle for existence may be rendered inoperative, by the lessening of the frightful amount of suffering at present involved by it. The principle of competition, however, will still operate, when the struggle for existence, (which as it now occurs amongst the poverty stricken millions constitutes a hideous evil) shall be so minimised as to be no longer attended with the terrible and utterly useless suffering and misery now brought about by it. The only result of the struggle in its latter form, being the direct benefit—by the terribly over-crowded state of the labor market in all depart-

ments—of the employer and capitalist, who profit by the consequently cheapened price of labor. The progress of mankind is—happily—not dependent upon the continued misery and suffering of men; and it is extraordinary that any thinker on the subject should have persuaded himself that it is.



CHAPTER VII.

HEREDITARY TRANSMISSION OF DISEASE.

Hereditary diseases constantly the cause of great suffering and early death—Diseased and weakly persons bound to refrain from begetting offspring.

IT need hardly be said that in many instances, parents are morally obliged to refrain from having any offspring. Where the state of health of either forbids it, or where the birth of offspring would be dangerous to the mother, a preventive check to the risk of conception should always be employed. There can be no doubt that the greatest evil afflicting suffering humanity is the hereditary transmission of disease. More die from diseases, incurred from hereditary disposition, than from all other causes of death put together. The world is full of disease derived in this manner. There is suffering and death on all sides. Few of us attain the natural limit of life. Few of us live to a hearty and vigorous old age. A large proportion of the population consists of weakly and diseased men and women. How many thousands never know what it is to feel rude and vigorous health! How many thousands dragging out a weary existence of pain and suffering: how many thousands of chronic invalids, waiting mournfully for death to release them, owe their sad fate to their parentage! Their parents, either ignorant of, or indifferent to, the crime they were committing, begat them, when one or both were in a bad and diseased condition of health, and bestowed a legacy of suffering, a heritage of woe, upon the unhappy beings they called into life. Now, the man or the woman who—knowing themselves to be in an unfit state of health, or suffering from disease—becomes a parent, is guilty of a very great crime. By no process of reasoning can it ever be pretended that any man or woman has the right to inflict future pain and suffering upon any human being. No one has a right to give life, where life will be a curse, and not a blessing. They commit a horrible wickedness if they do so.

The responsibility of parentage in this matter is very great. Unfortunately this responsibility has too often been ignored. And nothing has more directly tended to cause it to be ignored, than the ridiculous and puerile superstition which pretends that the child is not the creation of its own parents, but—in some

mysterious and incomprehensible way—of Deity! The ignorant superstition which complacently attributes all ills to the working of a mysterious God, has served too long to prevent men from the investigation of this and other evils. The child is mentally, morally, and physically, the result of its parentage. It will take on the united attributes—good and bad—of its parents. But so greatly has superstition served to obscure this truth, that if a child is born malformed, diseased, or in any way imperfect, instead of the natural causes which have led to such result being studiously investigated by the parents in their own persons, they prefer to shirk the responsibility attaching to them, and proceed to talk about the "mysterious ways of Providence, visitation of God," &c. The direct result of such silly interpretations of natural results and causes, is that the parents of diseased and weakly offspring actually persuade themselves that they ought to be condoled with, and pitied! They prate about the "will of the Almighty," and seldom remember that the curse of pain and suffering brought upon a being for life, is entirely owing to their own sin in giving that being life!—for such it assuredly is, none the less that they may never have anticipated the result. "Evil," says the poet most truly, "is wrought by want of thought as well as want of heart," and every man and woman are bound by every law, before becoming parents, to consider whether they are able to transmit a sound body and vigorous life to those they bring into existence.

Unhappily, but few consider this, the most important consideration. Every other paltry consideration is commonly taken into account but this, and the result is that men and especially women marry every day, and have offspring, who are totally unfit to become parents. This crime is committed daily in this land of boasted civilisation! Men and women suffering more or less from lung diseases, heart disease, cancer, scrofula, syphilis, &c., marry, and beget offspring without scruple, who are born with the seeds of their parents' diseases in them, to know only an existence of suffering, and an early and premature death. Thus is consumption transmitted to an extent that is simply horrible! Who of us does not count a consumptive family among his acquaintance? Who of us has not witnessed the slow triumph of the fell destroyer—youth fading gradually into the grave, after an existence so short, that they may almost be said never to have lived at all? This terribly general disease is mainly kept up by the hereditary disposition. Only those, then, who are free from all disease, and possessed of bodily health and vigor, have the right to beget offspring.

In the truer morality now dawning upon the world, it will be rightly regarded as infamous for any physically or mentally diseased man or woman to become a parent. Men and women who are unfit from any cause to propagate the race, may still be disinclined to remain in a life of solitude and celibacy, and may elect to marry; but they are morally bound to refrain from offspring. Only when, under the influence of a strong public opinion, this responsibility of parentage shall be universally appreciated, and the justice and morality of this prohibition generally recognised, may we hope to see an end put to the hereditary transmission of bodily and mental disease and weakness, and the realisation of the manifold and great blessings to the human race consequent therefrom.